

Omaha
9 November 68

Dear Hal,

After the conventions Jean and I kept waiting, somehow, for the real candidates to appear (regarding the whole campaign, in the meantime, rather as we might a Beckett play)...but, alas, they never did. Instead, the dumbshow ran on and on—until it seemed that we had all been interned in some surreal zone of paraconsciousness. But the play within the play is—formally, at least—over now. Everyone, say the editorialists, is greatly relieved.
Hmmm.

I was interested by what you said in an October letter about your own manner and style of writing. It seems to me you've described the problem uncommonly well. Few that I've known have been able to comment so objectively on their own work. So I'll add my bit...for whatever, if anything, it may be worth. I do think you should (in print) keep closer rein on your anger and sense of indignation—not because it rings false, for it certainly does not, but because readers may tend to give it more attention than they will the evidence you are trying to present. Remember that if your material is presented in such a way as to allow the reader to feel the essential tone of a situation or set of circumstances without your having hit him over the head too obviously with your own responses...then he will be more apt to listen to what you're telling him. Most readers naturally have higher regard for their own intelligence than they do for that of the guy who wrote the book they are reading. And as soon as you start shouting directly at them...well, then they start having doubts about your credentials as a reliable purveyor of information and analysis. In addition, there is the matter of your particular subject. Feeling still runs very deep...deeper, really, than I had supposed. I find people willing to denounce "all Kennedys" without a moments hesitation, and I find (fewer) people who still mourn for the President. Thus you may expect to have those who will agree with whatever you write—uncritical "partisans," and you may expect to have those who will resent whatever you write or say and seek to silence or discredit you no matter what evidence you present, in however skillful and honest a manner you present it. Frankly, I don't know which group is the more dangerous...but I would remind you of one fact: the professional haters and distrusters of the people, many of whom are as you well know frighteningly powerful, fully expect to be confronted in the not very distant future with the presidential ambitions of Edward Kennedy. With that in mind, they are not likely to rest. They'll want to stop him, I think...one way or another.

Hour of 6a.m. approaching...must have a look at things on the ward.

Best personal regards,

